

*CLAIM AMENDMENTS*

Rewrite claims 1 and 5-11 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A rotary printing machine comprising a pair of sheet holding and transfer systems disposed in side-by-side relation for transferring sheets in the printing machine, said sheet holding and transfer systems defining a sheet transfer area therebetween,

a sheet guide apparatus disposed underneath said transfer area, said sheet guide apparatus including a sheet guide which defines a guide surface for guiding movement of sheets adjacent said transfer area, a first pneumatic system for directing air in said sheet guide and through said guide surface for guiding sheet movement along said guide surface, and

a second separate pneumatic system operable for blowing an air stream over an external end of said sheet guide toward in the direction of said transfer area to facilitate reliable transfer of sheets between said sheet holding and transfer systems.

2. (Original) The rotary printing machine of claim 1 in which said transfer area is defined by a tangent point between said sheet holding and transfer systems.

3. (Original) The printing machine of claim 2 in which said sheet holding and transfer systems comprise a pair of sheet carrying cylinders.

4. (Original) The printing machine of claim 2 in which said sheet transfer and holding systems comprise one sheet-carrying cylinder and a circulating conveyor system.

5. (Currently Amended) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said second separate pneumatic system is located adjacent a sheet outlet defined by said sheet holding and transfer systems from which sheets are directed.

6. (Currently Amended) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said second separate pneumatic system is located adjacent a sheet inlet defined by said sheet holding and transfer systems into which sheets are directed.

7. (Currently Amended) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said second pneumatic system comprises a plurality of controllable fans for directing a low pressure high, volume air flow.

8. (Currently Amended) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said second pneumatic system is mounted on said sheet guide.

9. (Currently Amended) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said sheet guide includes a first flow duct communicating with openings in said guide surface, a further said first pneumatic system communicating with said first flow duct, and a second flow duct communicating with said second separate pneumatic system and having at least one discharge outlet opening aimed in the direction of the transfer area.

10. (Currently Amended) The printing machine of claim 5 in which said sheet guide includes a first flow duct communicating with openings in said guide surface, said first a further pneumatic system communicating with said first flow duct, and a second flow duct communicating with said second separate pneumatic system and having at least one discharge outlet opening aimed in the direction of said sheet outlet.

11. (Currently Amended) The printing machine of claim 6 in which said sheet guide includes a first flow duct communicating with openings in said guide surface, said first a further pneumatic system communicating with said first flow duct, and a second flow duct communicating with said second separate pneumatic system and having at least one discharge outlet opening aimed in the direction of said sheet inlet.

Add the following new claims 12-17:

12. (New) A rotary printing machine comprising a pair of sheet holding and transfer systems disposed in side-by-side relation for transferring sheets in the printing machine, said sheet holding and transfer systems defining a sheet transfer area therebetween,

a sheet guide apparatus disposed underneath said transfer area, said sheet guide apparatus including a sheet guide which defines a guide surface for guiding movement of sheets adjacent said transfer area, said sheet guide including a comb with spaced apart guide fingers adjacent said transfer area, and

a pneumatic system separate from said sheet guide operable for blowing an air stream externally over an end of said comb and between said guide fingers toward said transfer area to facilitate reliable transfer of sheets between said sheet holding and transfer systems.

13. (New) The rotary printing machine of claim 12 in which said transfer area is defined by a tangent point between said sheet holding and transfer systems.

14. (New) The printing machine of claim 13 in which said sheet holding and transfer systems comprise a pair of sheet carrying cylinders.

15. (New) The printing machine of claim 13 in which said sheet transfer and holding systems comprise one sheet-carrying cylinder and a circulating conveyor system.

16. (New) The printing machine of claim 12 in which said pneumatic system is mounted on said sheet guide.

17. (New) The printing machine of claim 12 in which said pneumatic system includes a flow duct mounted on said sheet guide, said flow duct having at least one discharge outlet opening oriented in the direction of the transfer area.